

**PUBLIC HEARING of the Town Council held Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 7:05 P.M. in Town Council Chambers, 105 Harrisville Main St., Harrisville, for and within the Town of Burrillville.**

**PRESENT: Council President Nancy F. Binns, Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Robert A. Bishop, Kevin D. Heitke, John M. Karmozyn Jr. and Norman C. Mainville**

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilor Margaret L. Dudley was excused**

**OTHERS PRESENT: Debra Stockwell, Mary Margaret Karmozyn, Dorothy A. Cardon, Joan Cote, Paul Couture and Raymond J. Trinqué of the School Committee; Superintendent of Schools Steven Welford and Supervisor of Business Affairs Robin Kimatian; Arthur R. Hurley and David C. Ketcham of the Budget Board**

**Relative to discussing the School Budget**

**NOTE: The public hearing was duly advertised in the Woonsocket Call on May 7, 13 and 20, 2009.**

# **1. Comments from the Budget Board**

**Arthur R. Hurley, Chair of the Budget Board, pointed out that the Budget Board had concerns related to: 1) increases in the teachers' salaries outside of the contract; 2) management of the June Rockwell**

**Levy Community Rink; and 3) revenue/use of June Rockwell Levy Community Rink.**

## **2. Comments from Debra Stockwell, Chair, Burrillville School Committee**

**Debra Stockwell, Chair, Burrillville School Committee, deferred to the Budget Subcommittee.**

## **3. Comments from Steven Welford, Superintendent of the Burrillville School Department**

**Steven Welford, Superintendent of Schools, acknowledged Town Manager Michael C. Wood, the Budget Board, and the School Committee Budget Subcommittee. Mr. Welford indicated that the School Committee and Administration supported Mr. Wood's recommendations.**

**Mr. Welford summarized the School Department's budget proposal, which, he said excluded salary increases and reduced some levels of service; i.e. one less bus. Mr. Welford reviewed fixed costs.**

**Mr. Welford discussed the intent to support educational programming and the practice of utilizing non-budget funds such as grants, whenever possible.**

**Mr. Welford indicated that the undesignated fund balance from FY2009 would be expended to meet obligations related to retirements.**

**Mr. Welford suggested that the greatest concern in the proposed budget related to retirement expenses which had been reduced based upon anticipated action on the State level. Mr. Welford noted that, if the General Assembly takes no action related to retirement expenses, the School Department would incur a deficit.**

#### **4. Comments from Michael C. Wood, Town Manager**

**Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, explained the reasoning behind his proposed School Department budget which, he said, supports the increase requested by the School Department. Mr. Wood observed that the proposed budget stresses maintenance of educational programs. Mr. Wood voiced concerns related to the unresolved teachers' collective bargaining agreement.**

**Mr. Wood suggested that further reductions in State aid, including general revenue sharing, could adversely affect the entire town budget, including the School Department.**

**Steven Welford, Superintendent of Schools, commented on the success of the June Rockwell Levy Community Rink. Mr. Welford noted that under the current management the Rink is self-sufficient and able to repay an earlier loan from the Town.**

## **5. Public Comment:**

**Note: Persons who wish to address the Council shall state their name and address**

**Raymond Trinke, Burrillville School Committee, expanded upon the success at the June Rockwell Levy Community Rink.**

**Mr. Trinke recommended that the School Committee, Town Council and Administration work together to centralize purchases and services. Council President Nancy F. Binns concurred. The matter was discussed.**

**Susan Kent of Benedict Road thanked the Superintendent and School Committee for a job well done.**

**David C. Ketcham, Budget Board member, discussed:**

- the significance of the State's budget condition;**
- Budget Board's recommended reductions being returned to the budget;**
- public comment from the earlier hearing requesting further additions to the budget;**
- the benefits to making certain changes; i.e.,**
  - o changing the health insurance program;**
  - o increasing the employee contribution for health insurance;**
  - o eliminating the raises that are not contractually required;**

- o eliminating health insurance and benefits for School Committee members;
- the low budget for textbooks.

Dr. Ketcham suggested that the Town Council consider reducing the budget and setting aside the funds, which could be released to the School Department only if the School Committee demonstrates that the funds would be used for education purposes.

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, agreed that there is a possibility that the budget situation could worsen. Mr. Wood advised against overreaction, reviewed steps that had been taken, and suggested that there would be an ability to respond to changing circumstances.

Steven Welford, Superintendent of Schools, commented on the teachers' raises, suggesting that it might be prudent to delay action. The situation was discussed.

Steven Welford, Superintendent of Schools, noted that the School Committee had recently authorized the purchase of \$180,000 for textbooks.

Council President Nancy F. Binns read the following into the record:

To: Town Council Members and School Committee

From: Christopher Desjardins, 1140 Sherman Farm Road

**Date 5/28/2009**

**Dear Town Council Members,**

**As a resident of Burrillville I'd like to have this letter read into the record for tonight's public meeting regarding the School Budget.**

**As a parent of a child in the school district and as a taxpayer I had one major concern involving the school budget as it is proposed. That concern is the health care costs for School Committee members that I believe is in line item 2500 of the budget.**

**As the budget stands now, School Committee members receive full health care benefits at no cost. It is my understanding that teacher contract proposals that have been made public suggested that teacher co-pays for health insurance increase in order to meet budgetary limits. In this respect, I do not disagree with that suggestion. I do, however, find the thought process of the School Committee to be incongruent. On one hand they need or suggest that teachers pay more for health care co-pays to meet budgetary concerns, and on the other they see no need to do the same for themselves.**

**To follow this comment, Town Council members also receive health care benefits at no cost. The ongoing policy of Town Council members and School Committee members receiving fully paid family**

health insurance is not warranted for the positions held. I understand and I am well aware that the time spent in chambers or meetings doesn't reflect the actual time members take in fulfilling their responsibilities. Perhaps stipends for both Council members and School Committee members need to be doubled or tripled in order to reflect the time and work put in by members.

Members should have access to health insurance, but they should pay for the entire premium as they hold part time positions.

It is important for the public to know that not all members take advantage of the extreme benefit. I ask the members of the Town Council and School Committee members to think about the individuals who work full time and don't have access to health care, or for those of us who do, pay three, four or five thousand dollars annually in co-pays.

To this end I ask a Town Council member to make a motion to amend the compensation of the Town Council and/or the School Committee's health insurance benefit to have members pay the entire premium cost of the insurance.

Thank you,

Christopher Desjardins

## **6. VOTED to close the public hearing.**

**Motion by Councilor Norman C. Mainville. Seconded by Councilor Wallace F. Lees. The vote was unanimous by the six members present. Voting in favor were Council President Nancy F. Binns and Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Robert A. Bishop, Kevin D. Heike, John M. Karmozyn, Jr. and Norman C. Mainville. Councilor Margaret L. Dudley was excused.**

## **7. Town Council deliberation**

**Councilor Norman C. Mainville commented on disrespectful treatment of the Budget Board by a member of the School Committee at the Budget Board meeting held to discuss the 2010 budget.**

**Councilor Mainville voiced concern at the teachers' "work to rule" practice and recommended seeking creative resolutions.**

**Councilor Mainville suggested that the Town review unfunded State mandates and consider disregarding those mandates. Councilor Mainville described recommendations to achieve some level of independence.**

**Councilor Kevin D. Heitke advised resisting the easy and politically expedient path of just saying "stop all spending". Councilor Heitke suggested continuing the route of seeking ingenious ways to create**



revenue. Councilor Heitke recommended reaching out to the community for ideas to achieve these goals.

Council President Nancy F. Binns commented on the benefits of the School Committee, Town Council and School and Town Administrations working diligently to develop mutual understanding. Council President Binns proposed continued cooperation. Council President commended the Budget Board and the School Department for their efforts in preparing the budget proposal.

Susan Kent of Benedict Road recommended that the Town Council consider printing money for use in local businesses. Ms. Kent explained the benefits of printing local currency. Council President Binns asked Ms. Kent to forward information to the Council.

**8. VOTED to adjourn.**

Motion by Councilor Norman C. Mainville. Seconded by Councilor Wallace F. Lees. The vote was unanimous by the six members present. Voting in favor were Council President Nancy F. Binns and Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Robert A. Bishop, Kevin D. Heike, John M. Karmozyn, Jr. and Norman C. Mainville. Councilor Margaret L. Dudley was excused.

The hearing was taped. The tape is on file with the record of the hearing.

**Louise R. Phaneuf, Town Clerk**